



What makes a speech great?

Historical context

Presenter

In the UK the early 1980's was a time of mass unemployment and the government's popularity was at its lowest. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher rallied her Conservative Party and gave her most famous speech. It's remembered mainly because it encapsulated a historical moment that defines her to this day.

Margaret Thatcher

We shall not be diverted from our course. To those waiting with baited breath for favourite media catch phrase "the U turn", I have only one thing to say. You turn if you want to. The lady's not for turning.

Tom Clarke

Borrowing this very obscure reference from the theatre about the lady's not for burning, she used this the lady's not for turning line, which got captured in all the media and was run away at the time. And also calling herself the Iron Lady of the western world, something that the Russians had been referring to her as which she then turned to her own advantage. All these images of strength she pulled together in response to the events she was saying and created a caricature, which wasn't entirely flattering but was very much to her advantage and it was one that lives on to this day really.

Presenter

Women are underrepresented in the pantheon of great recorded speeches. Tom Clarke.

Speeches that we remember tend to be made by leaders and leaders tend to reflect who's got the power at any one time. I should just add however one of the really great rhetoricians of our time, Tony Benn, always says that the best speeches ever heard given in his life was by someone who had never given a speech before which was a wife of one of the miners during the 1984 miners' strike.

Miner's Wife

I believe that if you shout long enough and loud enough people will listen. I'm going to shout long and I'm going to shout loud.

Tom Clarke

It does make the point that you can have a great speech that might not have great surroundings and will make an impression on individuals.

Miner's Wife

I've only one message now and that is for Mrs Thatcher and her government. Men, women and families are together now and you've got one hell of a bloody fight on your hands.